

hillsides. "We have no idea why," said Morrison. "It would just be wild speculation to give a reason." Mice belonging to this genus include deer mice, brush mice, and white-footed mice. They generally weigh about an ounce and are a few inches long.

Morrison says his findings will be compiled with those of researchers doing similar studies in different geographical regions of the state to try to determine when hantavirus infection is highest in rodents and thus when it may most likely be spread to humans. With such information, people can be told to be careful in certain habitats or to avoid being near rodents during certain times of year.

Although the chances of contracting HPS are low, according to Levy, concern is high because one out of two people who get the disease die. For the present, Levy advises avoiding all contact with rodents and making sure homes are rodent-proofed by caulking and sealing holes and other possible entrances.

## Frauenfelder Straddles Border

In November 1993, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) created the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) to deal with environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexican border. Last February, the U.S. State Department and the Mexican government formally approved Roger Frauenfelder as the BECC's first general manager.

Taylor, an environmentalist with the New Mexico-based Southwest Research and Information Center, a nonprofit environmental advocacy organization.

The border area that encompasses the BECC's scope of activity was defined by the 1983 La Paz agreement as a corridor 100 kilometers on either side of the U.S.-Mexican border, stretching 2,000 miles from San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Mexico, to Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico. The corridor is bordered by six Mexican states and four U.S. states (Arizona, California, Texas, and New Mexico). Ten million people live within the area. The commission is based in Juarez, Mexico.

Frauenfelder, a native of the border region (the Yuma Valley in Arizona), is fluent in Spanish. He has a background in engineering, regional and local planning, and a military career that includes working as a construction manager on environmental issues at various naval institutions in the United States and around the world. Immediately prior to his BECC appointment, Frauenfelder worked as deputy city manager for San Diego with responsibility for the city's water supply and wastewater treatment system. Frauenfelder will oversee a support staff that includes a deputy director, an outreach coordinator, a civil engineer who is the general project manager, an environmental project manager, and an information systems specialist.

Commenting on the environmental health of the border-area communities,

jects that might qualify for its support. The Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo, for example, may get BECC support because it has a water treatment system nearing completion, but lacks the money to finish the project. "It takes some time for an organization with our scope of activity to get going and to put an infrastructure in place," Frauenfelder said. "We are refining the project submission process and establishing our criteria for project approval."

Headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, NADBANK is supported by the U.S. and Mexican governments and provides \$3 billion in new financing to supplement existing sources of funds and to help encourage the participation of private capital in BECC projects. "Not every project is going to have a revenue stream to repay the loan," Frauenfelder said. "We may have to go to private sources for help, if necessary, especially for those projects that might put a burden on small rural communities."

Despite the many challenges and heavy workload ahead, the BECC will not become an "overly bureaucratic operation," Frauenfelder pledged. "We plan to keep the project submission and review processes as simple and straightforward as possible," he explained. "We want to be open, supportive, and responsive to border residents."

## Getting the Word Out on Lead

Big Bird and his "Sesame Street" friends have educated children for years on a variety of topics. The National Safety Council's Environmental Health Center (NSC-EHC) is now looking to these characters for help in spreading the word about the dangers of childhood lead poisoning.

In February, the Prudential Foundation awarded a \$1.2 million grant to the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) and the EHC to develop and launch a nationwide campaign to raise public awareness about lead poisoning. The groups are working to produce an educational video, an audio cassette, and print materials in which characters from the children's educational television show, "Sesame Street," will discuss the dangers and sources of lead poisoning and urge regular testing for blood-lead levels. The campaign will also inform adults of measures they can take to lower children's exposure to lead in the home and in child-care settings. The video and materials will be distributed free of charge to families, child-care professionals, educators, health care professionals, hospitals, community-based clinics, and public health facilities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, lead poisoning is the most preventable pediatric health

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—ROGER FRAUENFELDER



Frauenfelder will direct the BECC's efforts in assisting border communities to develop and implement environmental infrastructure projects and to certify projects for financing by the North American Development Bank (NADBANK), the BECC's sister organization, also established under NAFTA.

"Historic and unprecedented," is the way Linda Taylor, one of the BECC's 10 directors (5 each from Mexico and the United States) described the commission's establishment. "The BECC is the first international entity set up by countries to address the environmental and social issues surrounding liberalized trade," explained

Frauenfelder said, "Services Americans take for granted, such as running water and waste water collection systems, are totally lacking in the area. It's going to take a lot of money to bring the border area up to the standard we think of as normal." Frauenfelder added that studies done by the U.S. Department of Commerce estimate the task will cost \$6-\$8 billion over the next 10 years.

NAFTA set four major priorities for the BECC: encourage the prevention of water pollution, improve waste water treatment, manage municipal solid waste, and work to resolve other environmental issues related to the first three.

The BECC is already considering pro-

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problem today. Lead poisoning can cause severe damage to a child's developing brain and nervous system and may result in mental retardation, hearing loss, anemia, and kidney and liver damage. The EPA estimates that 9% of children under the age of six, some 1.7 million children, are currently adversely affected by exposure to lead. The primary means of childhood exposure is through lead-based paint dust in homes.

"While substantial progress has been made in removing lead from the environment, it's still a significant problem in many inner-city areas," said Digna Sanchez, vice president of Community Education Services, the CTW's educational outreach division. "Through this combined effort—The Prudential Foundation's concern and generosity, the National Safety Council's expertise in this issue, and CTW's proven record in reaching children—we hope to make a difference in young lives."

The NSC-EHC will advise the CTW on key messages about lead poisoning for the educational materials and ensure that the information is consistent with current scientific understanding of lead poisoning. The CTW will be responsible for research and development of the television and audio components and for the outreach and distribution to the public. The NSC-EHC will also develop an adult brochure and help with outreach and distribution to the health care community.

The project will target children ages three to six, as well as the families and child care providers of children from birth to six years of age. "The project is unique because of its outreach to young children as well as adults," said Sanchez.

Because of the increased risk of lead poisoning in inner cities, special efforts will be made to reach children and families in those areas. The CTW has developed a three-pronged approach to reach these people, said Ellen Morgenstern of the CTW. First, they will distribute materials through the "Sesame Street" public education programs that exist in inner-city areas. These programs distribute information to child-care facilities. Second, the CTW will distribute materials directly to clinics in inner-city areas. Third, they will target individual physicians in inner-city areas. The campaign is expected to be launched in the spring of 1996.

## CDC Says NC Workers Get Little Legal Protection from Smoke

None of North Carolina's 2.6 million private industry employees is guaranteed complete protection from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, says a study by epidemiologists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study examined the effect of a 1993 law passed by the state—the nation's largest tobacco producer—requiring that smoking

According to Siegel, North Carolina's law is the most harmful to public health because, he says, it forces public employees to be exposed and, at the same time, leaves communities powerless to enact protection.

The requirement of smoking areas and a three-month window in which local regulations could be passed before the law went into effect make North Carolina's law unique. No other state has passed a bill that requires smoking areas, says Elizabeth Conlisk, the study's lead author and the CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer for North Carolina. "The bill itself did not restrict smoking at all. It actually required that smoking be permitted."

The CDC study, reported in the March 8 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, analyzed 89 local nonsmoking regulations in North Carolina, passed in the three-month window before the law took effect. The study found that by the year 2000, when all the local regulations have been phased in, 59% of private employees will not be guaranteed any protection from work site environmental tobacco smoke; 19% will have minimal protection in work sites that restrict smoking to separate areas but that do not have a separate HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system; 22% will have partial protection at work sites where smoking is restricted to designated areas with separate HVAC systems; and none will have complete protection. Private workplaces were studied because they employ about 83% of North Carolina's nonagricultural workforce.

During the 3-month period, the number of local regulations increased from 16 to 105, including rural as well as urban areas. This flurry of legislation indicates the depth of North Carolinians' concern about secondhand smoke, say opponents of the law. "Contrary to what the tobacco industry is trying to portray, there isn't monolithic protobacco sentiment in North Carolina or anywhere," says Kevin Goebel, manager of legislative programs for Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, a lobbying organization for local, state, and federal smoking restrictions. "Nonsmokers are the majority, and the desire to protect nonsmokers is prevalent everywhere. It crosses all geographic groups, age, sex, race, every demographic profile you can think of." Goebel's organization reports that more than 200 communities nationwide have smoke-free ordinances and more than 100 communities have smoke-free workplace ordinances.



**Elmo says.** A project by the Children's Television Workshop and the National Safety Council is using "Sesame Street" characters to educate children and families about lead.

be permitted in at least 20% of the space in state-controlled buildings and prohibiting localities from passing more restrictive regulations for public and private buildings. The study concluded that "instead of being a victory for tobacco control, [the law] has been a setback for public health in North Carolina."

The study has drawn attention to the potential public health effects of preemptive state laws across the country. Twenty-five states have preemption laws regarding smoking; 17 of these states preempt smoking regulations in the workplace. "Preemption has a devastating effect on the public's health because it creates weak standards that cannot be strengthened by local communities," says study co-author Michael Siegel, epidemiologist for the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

Richard Termine/CTW